

Good afternoon councilmembers and Mr. Glass, my name is William Godnick and I am a senior at Wootton High School. Today, I am here to voice the concerns of the often neglected students with special needs. The Americans with Disabilities Act is over 30 years old and the majority of Montgomery County Public Schools still aren't ADA compliant. How are we supposed to believe that MCPS is inclusive of all students when our school buildings aren't infrastructurally safe for everyone and indirectly marginalize those who can't navigate through them as easily? The lack of ADA compliance is awfully inconsiderate of the diversity of MCPS's student body. Personally, I have a sister who was a special education student at MCPS. She was initially assigned to Wootton as her school, but the lack of appropriate physical infrastructure was a substantial obstacle to her educational well-being and progress, so she had to move to another school with a more conducive environment. At Wootton, there is only one emergency exit from the school for the area that hosts the Wootton Special Education Program. This exit empties out onto a relatively narrow strip of sidewalk above a steep hill of grass. This is an extremely precarious setup in cases of emergencies for special needs students with physical challenges. One fall or misstep in a moment of panic could injure many people. There are also portable classrooms nearby that empty out into the same area. This would be overwhelming for the average student not to mention our special needs classmates, their teachers, and aides.

We cannot overlook the rights to the safety of all of our student body. As we have continued to advocate for this issue, MCPS officials have promised change, however, we

continue to see none. The lack of ADA compliance throughout MCPS buildings discriminates against a group that already faces enough challenges. The lack of ADA compliance throughout MCPS fails to provide a free appropriate public education for students with disabilities. The lack of ADA compliance throughout MCPS denies students with disabilities their basic rights. In closing, I am not here just to represent the positions of the Wootton community as a whole, but also to highlight the voices of those involved in our Special Education program who might not always be able to express their feelings of insecurity as directly as I am relaying to you right now. Thank you for your time and consideration.